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# The Paterson Pageant (1913): The Birth of Docudrama as a Weapon in the Class Struggle

By LESLIE FISHBEIN

*The strike was in New Jersey, but it was presented as theatre in New York City, and New York intellectuals played a role that was both practical and inspirational. Leslie Fishbein is a member of the Department of American Studies at Rutgers/The State University of New Jersey.*

The Paterson Pageant of 1913 was a unique cultural event, not on account of its direct influence, which appears to have been negligible, but because of its significance as innovation; this single theatrical performance irrevocably altered the possibilities of the pageant form and represented the birth of docudrama as a weapon in the class struggle. Presented at Madison Square Garden in New York City, the pageant was created as a media event that would subvert the press blackout of news about the strike of 25,000 silk workers in Paterson, New Jersey, some twenty-three miles from the city. Also intended to promote fundraising and to enhance striker morale, the Pageant was an anomaly, a collaboration between New York radical intellectuals and Paterson silk workers to create a dramatic reenactment of the actual events of the Paterson Silk Strike by using the strikers themselves as actors. Prior to the Paterson pageant, pageants had been highly conservative in both form and content; directed by professionals, they were largely historical celebrations intended to promote patriotism and loyalty to community values. In contrast, the Paterson Pageant was largely an amateur effort con-

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cerned with immediate events and intended not to hallow the past but to alter the future.<sup>1</sup> The Paterson Pageant revolutionized pageantry by deliberately effacing the distinction between actors and audience, by using drama as documentary to alter consciousness and to promote support for the class struggle.

The Paterson Pageant was a product of inspiration born out of desperation as Paterson silk strikers faced the prospect of starvation after months of solidarity on strike. Paterson had a long history of strike activity harking back to 1828 and of labor militancy that included association with the National Labor Union and the Knights of Labor. Known as "Red City," Paterson also had gained a reputation as a "hotbed of anarchy." Anarchist editor Luigi Galleani had led a strike there several years earlier; Italian anarchist Enrico Malatesta had been the target of an assassination attempt while on a speaking tour in Paterson, and Gaetano Bresci, the anarchist who killed King Humbert I of Italy in 1900, was a Paterson resident active in the local Italian anarchist movement.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this

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Like the Paterson Pageant, this article is a collaborative effort that benefited from information and suggestions provided by actual participants, in this case radical filmmakers and distributors, as well as historians, archivists, and friends. Therefore, I would like to thank Jean-Christophe Agnew, Erik Barnouw, Richard Barsam, the late Tom Brandon, Paul Buhle, Aldo R. Cupo of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University, William K. Everson, Thomas Featherstone of the Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs at Wayne State University, Steve Golin, Howard Green of the New Jersey Historical Commission, John B. Herbst of the American Labor Museum at Botto House, Leo Hurwitz, Joris Ivens, Zoltan Kemeny, Alice Kessler-Harris, Ben Maddow, Dione Miles of the Walter P. Reuther Library, Mark Naison, Jerry Nathans, John O'Connor, Peter Rollins, Roy Rosenzweig of the Institute on the Federal Theatre Project and New Deal Culture, Leo Seltzer, Charles Silver of the Museum of Modern Art Film Study Center, Robert Snyder, Sem C. Sutter of the Special Collections of the Joseph Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago, Willard Van Dyke, Melanie Wisner of the Houghton Library of Harvard University, the staffs of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Houghton Library, Tamiment Library, the Billy Rose Theatre Collection of the Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts, and Alexander Library of Rutgers/The State University of New Jersey, and others too numerous to mention.

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1. "The Paterson Strike Pageant," *The Independent* 74 (19 June 1913): 1407.

2. Philip S. Foner, *The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917*, Volume IV of *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (1965; New York: International Publishers, 1973) 353; Patrick Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Anchor Books, 1967) 112-113; Emma Goldman, "The Psychology of Political Violence," in Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1917; New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969) 103-105; Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Rebel Girl: An Autobiography: My First Life (1906-1926)* (1955; New York International Publishers, 1973) 154. Quotation appears on p. 154.

tradition of worker militancy and isolation from respectable sources of support, Paterson silk strikers could rely only upon their fellow workers in the region and New York radical intellectuals to provide financial aid and moral support in the critical days of the strike.

The strike represented an heroic effort to preserve the remnants of the craft tradition in a rapidly industrializing silk industry. By 1913 Paterson was the nation's leading silk producer, but it no longer restricted its output to the production of only the finest high-grade and expensive silks. As the result of competition from manufacturers of cheaper low quality silk from Pennsylvania, Paterson manufacturers converted from a single loom system producing high-grade broad and ribbon silk woven on jacquard or German looms to the creation of cheaper silks produced on larger, more efficient multiple looms operated by women and children. Distressed at the prospect of increased unemployment, reduced wages, and the decline of silk weaving as a craft, Paterson weavers resorted to the strike as a weapon to protest their victimization by technological change and economic exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

Working conditions in Paterson were deplorable and worsened as the proportionate number of unskilled in the work force grew. With the exception of dyers, the average silk worker labored ten hours a day at a wage that yielded an annual income of \$580.—the lowest offered by any of New Jersey's leading twenty-five industries.<sup>4</sup> As Italian, Jewish, and Polish immigrants flocked to Paterson, their arrival coincided with the introduction of high-speed automatic looms and the speedup of the work force. Silk workers faced a ten hour day in mills that were unheated in winter and stifling in summer when artificial humidifiers introduced the requisite degree of dampness for silk weaving. Steam and acid fumes from the dye created a fog in the workrooms that obscured the workers' vision. And many workers died early from tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases.<sup>5</sup>

3. Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969) 264–265; Graham Adams, Jr., *Age of Industrial Violence, 1910–1915: The Activities and Findings of the United States Commission on Industrial Relations* (1966; New York: Columbia University Press, 1971) 76.

4. Dubofsky 265; Foner 352.

5. Joyce Kornbluh, ed., *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (1964; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968) 197–198.

The workers also revolted because of a variety of oppressive devices that cheated them of the full fruits of their labor. Weavers complained that foremen would assign a favored worker easy material to loom and then use him as a pacemaker to drive the other workers. Some mills hired little girls as apprentices on contracts that permitted the employers to withhold half the children's wages until the end of a full year. To avoid these final payments, many bosses would fire these trainees before the expiration of the twelve months. One company even fined its workers fifty cents for such infractions as talking, laughing, opening a window, or a torn apron.<sup>6</sup> Since work was seasonal and highly responsive to economic conditions since silk was a luxury, wages remained depressed, and men discovered that it was impossible for them to be the sole breadwinner. In fact, one member of the Industrial Workers of the World later testified that the Paterson Silk Strike had erupted because men had been forced to send their wives to work to support their families.<sup>7</sup> But even family labor failed to provide Paterson's immigrant workers with economic security. The plentitude of cheap immigrant labor and competition from low-wage Pennsylvania mills relentlessly depressed wage rates.<sup>8</sup>

The strike began unexpectedly on January 27, 1913, when eight hundred employees of the Doherty Silk Mill walked out in protest when four members of a workers' committee were fired for registering opposition to the introduction of the four-loom system. The strike became a general one in the following weeks as other broad-silk weavers, ribbon weavers, and dyehouse laborers joined the protest. The workers' action was spontaneous and represented an ad hoc response to oppressive technological change. The workers failed to receive support from the local American Federation of Labor, and the local Industrial Workers of the World (Chicago branch) had only a hundred registered members. In fact, "[n]ot more than 5 percent of those striking belonged to an organization."<sup>9</sup>

The strike was a prolonged and difficult one, but its leadership

6. Adams 77-78.

7. Evidence of Charles Krattiger, 14 August 1918, I.W.W. Collection, Box 117, Folder 6 in Collections of the Archives of Labor History and Urban Affairs, University Archives, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, Hereafter referred to as ALHUA.

8. Dubofsky 265.

9. Adams 77.

offered hope of a better future for immigrants and the unskilled, the workers most likely to be neglected by the American Federation of Labor with its stalwart craft tradition. Although the strike soon came to symbolize Wobbly hopes of organizing unskilled immigrant garment workers in the industrialized East, the Industrial Workers of the World did not instigate or lead the initial walkout at the Doherty Mills. Instead after this spontaneous action Local 152, I.W.W., led by Adolph Lessig and Ewald Koettgen, called a meeting of its hundred members at which the local decided to organize the striking workers on behalf of an end to the four-loom system in Paterson. As a result of the attractiveness of the I.W.W. slogan and the indifference of the A.F. or L. to their plight, the silk strikers readily entrusted control of the strike to the I.W.W.<sup>10</sup>

Paterson silk strikers turned to the I.W.W. in part because that organization had managed to lead a successful textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts despite the heterogeneity, lack of skill, and poverty of its largely immigrant work force. While superficially there were many strong affinities between Lawrence and Paterson as cities dominated by a single textile industry, in fact, there were many compelling differences too often ignored by the workers and their leaders. The Lawrence strike also had been a prolonged one, lasting nine weeks; it had been riddled by violence against the 25,000 woolen-mill workers who had faced pitched street battles with police officers and state militiamen as the workers struggled against a twenty cents-a-week wage cut. Lawrence demonstrated the feasibility of winning union victories despite the ethnic and craft antagonisms that manufacturers traditionally had exploited to divide the work force. As Angelo Rocco, a weaver and union organizer responsible for calling the Industrial Workers of the World into Lawrence, recalls: "There were 26 nationalities represented in the strike and even the soup kitchens were run by nationalities—the Syrians here, the Franco-Belgians there, the Italians over there. Nobody could even talk to each other because nobody knew English, but it all worked."<sup>11</sup>

In Lawrence, as later in Paterson, the I.W.W. had stressed non-

10. Foner 356–357.

11. Michael Knight, "Lawrence, Mass., Reliving 1912 Strike," *The New York Times* 27 April 1980: 26.

violent strike tactics, thereby gaining support from liberals and civil libertarians enraged at the denial of free speech to strikers and their supporters. And the I.W.W. also devised a scheme to gain favorable newspaper publicity for the strike and to diminish the burden of relief by evacuating starving strikers' children to sympathetic foster parents out of state. Margaret Sanger, then a trained nurse and chairman of the Women's Committee of the Socialist Party, led the first evacuation, and the press attention aroused by these orphans of the strike and the clubbing of children bound for Philadelphia and their parents by Lawrence police led many liberals and radicals to lend ardent support to the strikers' cause.<sup>12</sup> Clearly the Paterson Pageant represented a similar effort at achieving favorable publicity and fundraising.

Nevertheless, the Paterson situation differed markedly from that of Lawrence. In Lawrence, protected by high tariffs, the woolen industry had been booming, whereas in Paterson the silk industry was in decline as a result of competition from more modern mills in eastern Pennsylvania that employed a multiple loom system to produce cheap low-grade silks. It was this invidious competition that had precipitated the introduction of the three- and four-loom system in Paterson, thereby sparking the strike.<sup>13</sup> While William D. (Big Bill) Haywood tended to emphasize the similarities between Paterson and Lawrence, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was struck by the significant differences. As I.W.W. organizers invited to Paterson by the workers to catalyze the strike, both Flynn and Haywood realized that the Paterson workers were not fighting against a concentrated trust as had existed in Lawrence; in Paterson there were 300 mills, no trustification, and no company dominating the industry upon which the I.W.W. could concentrate the attack. As Flynn noted:

In Lawrence we had the American Woolen Company. Once having forced the American Woolen Company to settle, it was an easy matter to gather in the threads of the other mills. No such situation existed in Paterson. 300 manufacturers, but many of them having annexes in Pennsylvania, meant that they had a means whereby they could fill a large percentage

12. Dubofsky 246-252; Flynn 135-143.

13. Peter Carlson, *Roughneck: The Life and Times of Big Bill Haywood* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963) 203.



of their orders unless we were able to strike Pennsylvania simultaneously. And those mills employed women and children, wives and children of union weavers, who didn't need actually to work for a living wage, but worked simply to add to the family income.

And in Paterson the strikers were disadvantaged by the fact that silk was a luxury so that there was no compelling public pressure to force a settlement.<sup>14</sup>

Like Lawrence, the Paterson Silk Strike attracted the support of New York radical intellectuals, and Paterson's propinquity to New York permitted a far more intense degree of personal involvement. A unique relationship evolved among Paterson silk strikers, urban radicals, and Wobbly leaders, one that resulted in collaboration on a pageant that would revolutionize the pageant form and lead to the birth of docudrama as a weapon in the class struggle. Radicals were attracted to the strike effort in part because it allowed them to repudiate the highly conservative craft-oriented American Federation of Labor in favor of the far more militant and flamboyant Industrial Workers of the World. Paterson provided irrefutable proof of the class collaboration of the A.F. of L. When in 1909, inspired by visits to multiple loom mills in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania, Henry Doherty decided to introduce the three- and four-loom system in Paterson, he secured an agreement with the A.F. of L.'s. United Textile Workers whereby, in return for the right to organize the skilled crafts in his mill, the union would supply Doherty with weavers who would operate four looms in place of the customary two.<sup>15</sup> Worker discontent with years of A.F. of L. indifference to their needs had spurred them to turn to the far more militant I.W.W. As John H. Steiger noted in *The Memoirs of a Silk Striker* (1914): "The American Federation of Labor had no standing in Paterson. The workers had lost confi-

14. Carlson 202–203; William D. Haywood, "The Rip in the Silk Industry," *The International Socialist Review* 13 (May 1913): 785. In contrast to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Haywood emphasized the grim necessity that drew women and children to work in the Pennsylvania mills. "The Pennsylvania silk mills are situated generally in mining camps and industrial centers where the wages of the men have been so reduced that women and children have been compelled to seek employment in the mills. Ninety-one per cent of the workers in the Pennsylvania silk mills are women and children." Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "The Truth about the Paterson Strike," in Kornbluh 216–217. Quotation appears on p. 216.

15. Foner 353.



dence in the more conservative organization because of previous experiences under its leadership, and there were no other sane advisers to whom they felt they could turn with any degree of certainty that their interests would be properly safeguarded [except the I.W.W.]”<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the A.F. of L. sought to break the Paterson Silk Strike by calling a meeting to woo the strikers away from the Wobblies. The attempt proved disastrous as the strikers repudiated the A.F. of L. organizers and booed them for a solid hour and a half in retaliation for their denial of free speech to I.W.W. speakers.<sup>17</sup> When radical reporter John Reed was jailed in Paterson, he was impressed by the abiding hatred of the A.F. of L. shared by the jailed workers. Reed could not explain to a jailed striker why the A.F. of L. ostensibly counseled working-class solidarity yet failed to organize immigrants and the unskilled and discouraged strikes: “All I could say was that a good share of the Socialist Party and the American Federation of Labor have forgotten all about the Class Struggle, and seem to be playing a little game with capitalistic rules, called ‘Button, button, who’s got the Vote!’ ”<sup>18</sup>

The Industrial Workers of the World attracted support from rebel intellectuals not merely because it offered a clear alternative to the American Federation of Labor, but also because it had created a dramatic political event close to the home of American radicalism in Greenwich Village. Haywood realized that the strike itself was inherently dramatic, a notion ultimately crucial to the decision to celebrate the strike in pageant form.<sup>19</sup> Haywood proclaimed that the Paterson Silk Strike represented the closest approach ever in United States history to a general strike, thereby inspiring American rebels flirting with European notions of syndicalism.<sup>20</sup> The strike allowed Eastern radicals to lend their aid to a free speech fight comparable to those the Wobblies had waged in the West. Even a liberal clergyman, Rabbi Leo Mannheimer, congratulated

16. John H. Steiger, *The Memoirs of a Silk Striker* (Paterson, 1914) 7, quoted in Foner 357.

17. Alexander Scott, “What the Reds are Doing in Paterson,” *The International Socialist Review* 13 (June 1913): 855–856.

18. John Reed, “War in Paterson,” *The Masses* 4 (June 1913): 14, 16–17.

19. Steve Golin, “The Paterson Pageant: Success or Failure?” *Socialist Review* 69 (Vol. 13, No. 3) (May–June, 1983): 48.

20. Haywood 783.

the Wobblies on their success in preaching nonviolence to the strikers; in fact, out of 1,200 to 1,300 pickets arrested, none carried a weapon.<sup>21</sup> Actually Village intellectuals were confused and ambivalent regarding the Industrial Workers of the World, celebrating it for its militancy and revolutionary fervor while simultaneously proud of its peaceable conduct of the strike. As historian Robert A. Rosentone has noted: "The gulf between the image of the IWW as revolutionary and its actions as sober, responsible and nonviolent was not wholly apparent to well-wishers from Greenwich Village who now flocked to see their working-class heroes in action."<sup>22</sup>

Villagers like John Reed, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, Walter Lippmann, Max Eastman, Henrietta Rodman, Ernest Poole, Margaret Sanger, Harry Kemp, and Leroy Scott who made the pilgrimage to Paterson encountered a strike with compelling dramatic interest that could be readily translated into pageant form. The strike was led by a host of charismatic figures: Big Bill Haywood, the Wobblies' craggy chief; the eloquent anarchist Carlo Tresca; the handsome, mystical poet-organizer Arturo Giovannitti; and former girl orator for the Socialist Party, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.<sup>23</sup> These charismatic figures were ideally suited for leading roles in the Pageant itself as they sought to reenact their roles in the strike for the working-class audience assembled in Madison Square Garden. With outdoor rallies banned in Paterson, every Sunday the strikers marched to the neighboring town of Haledon to meet under the protection of its Socialist mayor. Strike sympathizers converged on Haledon to be inspired by the fervent speeches aimed at bolstering striker morale for yet another week of relentless struggle. And even more popular than the speeches were the songs as, led by their own bands, each group of strikers sang its ethnic songs, then harmonized on labor classics like "The Marseillaise" and "The Internationale."<sup>24</sup> The Pageant featured labor songs composed by

21. Leo Mannheimer, "Darkest New Jersey: How the Paterson Silk Strike Looks to One in the Thick of the Conflict," *The Independent* 74 (27 May 1913): 1190.

22. Robert A. Rosenstone, *Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975) 125.

23. Rosenstone 125-126; "Haledon Textile Worker's Home to be Formally Designated June 7 as National Historical Site," Textile Workers Union of America AFL-CIO, LLC, *News*, 2 June 1975: 1, ALHUA.

the strikers themselves in its fourth episode, and the audience was invited to join in the singing of "The Marseillaise," "The Internationale," and "The Red Flag."<sup>25</sup> The Pageant thus served to legitimize ethnic song as a weapon in the class struggle, a tradition that would be preserved in Paterson for decades by the Paterson Jewish Folk Chorus in its use of revolutionary Yiddish song.<sup>26</sup>

Rebel intellectuals were inspired by the Paterson strike as representing a vital step toward industrial democracy.<sup>27</sup> Big Bill Haywood and the other I.W.W. organizers made sure that the workers themselves controlled the strike effort, thereby putting into practice the Wobbly theory that leadership must come from the mass. In fact, Haywood claimed that the strike committee consisted of 127 members meeting in a public hall, that, contrary to popular impression, he was not the leader of the strike, that, in fact, the strike had no leaders: "In an I.W.W. strike there isn't room for anybody except the working class and the bosses; everybody else is excess baggage."<sup>28</sup> As Elizabeth Gurley Flynn subsequently noted, the strike was democratically administered by the silk workers themselves who had elected a strike committee of two delegates from each shop. The I.W.W. organizers did not exert independent control: "Our plan was very often nullified by the democratic administration of the strike committee."<sup>29</sup> The Pageant was equally democratic in form, with the workers en masse improvising out of their own experience the events they were to recreate on stage.<sup>30</sup>

The necessity for creating the Paterson Pageant arose out of the exigencies of the strike itself: the limited financial resources available for strike support, the need for some dramatic means of subverting the suppression of news about the strike, and the desire

24. Carlson 202–207; Flynn, *The Rebel Girl* 165; Flynn, "The Truth About the Paterson Strike" 219.

25. *Pageant of the Paterson Strike*, Madison Square Garden, Saturday, June 7th, 8:30 P.M. (New York: The Success Press. [1913]) 16–17, ALHUA.

26. Cf. Robert Snyder, "The Paterson Jewish Folk Chorus: Ethnicity, Politics and Musical Culture," New York University, 29 April 1981, unpublished draft, 28 pp., *passim*.

27. Rosenstone 125–126.

28. Carlson 203; Foner 357; "Who is the Leader?," *Solidarity*, 19 April 1913, reprinted in Kornbluh 204.

29. Flynn, "The Truth About the Paterson Strike" 216.

30. Foner 365.

to infuse the struggling workers with new energy and improve their morale. The Paterson strike violated one of the essential tenets of Wobbly strike strategy, namely that strikes should be short to be effective, a vital point given the fact that I.W.W. dues were negligible, and the organization had no strike treasury capable of supporting a prolonged struggle. However, as the Paterson strike dragged on for months, the I.W.W. found it difficult to sustain striker morale, and many of the strikers sought jobs in other mills. Yet it proved impossible to advocate a short strike because the workers believed in the ultimate success of their efforts and would have felt betrayed by the I.W.W. if they had been directed to return to work because their strike had been lost. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn argued that the lengthy strike was the product of popular demand: "To successfully advocate an intermittent strike or to go back to work and use sabotage was impossible for the simple reason that the people wanted a long strike, and until they themselves found out by experience that a long strike was a waste of energy it was no use for us to try to dictate to them."<sup>31</sup>

The strikers had demonstrated great tenacity and skill in organizing strike support, setting up a relief board to collect and allocate funds raised by public lectures and entertainments in neighboring cities and by advertisements in radical journals. The strikers themselves successfully maintained two food distribution centers to aid families, a restaurant to feed single men, a grocery, and a drug-store.<sup>32</sup> Despite the paucity of financial support—\$60,000 in the I.W.W. strike fund to support 25,000 strikers, an average of less than fifty cents a month per striker—the workers stayed on strike for six months.<sup>33</sup> As a result of the difficulty of mounting a strike with such slender financial resources, the Paterson Pageant was intended as a fundraising measure. When during the I.W.W. sedition trial at Chicago Haywood was asked the purpose of the Pageant, he answered unequivocally: "First to raise funds."<sup>34</sup> However, it remains unclear whether the I.W.W. and the strikers expected the

31. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl* 167; Flynn, "The Truth About the Paterson Strike" 220. Quotation appears on p. 220.

32. Kornbluh 199–200.

33. Flynn, "The Truth About the Paterson Strike" 221.

34. Dubofsky 434–437; William D. Haywood, Testimony, 10 August 1918, I.W.W. Collection, Box 117, Folder 2, III86, ALHUA.

Pageant itself to raise money or whether they hoped that it would aid other relief efforts by publicizing the strike more widely.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly the Pageant was intended as a publicity of the kind that had been so critical to the victory at Lawrence. New York newspapers paid little attention to the strike and purposely neglected the active role played by the strikers themselves: "Outside of Paterson only workers who read the socialist New York *Call* had any idea of what the silk workers and the IWW were doing in Paterson." In order to tap working-class and middle-class support in the metropolitan New York area, the Wobblies had to alter the negative view of the strike shaped by the hostile New York press.<sup>36</sup> The Paterson press nearly uniformly supported the manufacturers and counseled vigilante violence against the strikers.<sup>37</sup> As a result, the I.W.W. had virtually no local press support for the fight it was waging in Paterson for free speech and free assembly.<sup>38</sup> While the police brutality, judicial corruption, and press lies about the strike may have served to solidify the strikers, it became difficult to disseminate accurate news about the strike, especially after the conviction of Socialist newspaper editor Alexander Scott for criticizing police brutality, a major blow to free speech.<sup>39</sup>

The actual idea for the Pageant originated in the home of B. Shostac, a New York school teacher with whom Haywood was having an extramarital affair. Haywood was explaining the impossibility of transmitting news of the strike to New York workers on account of press censorship when Mabel Dodge, whose salon had become a mecca for radical artists and writers, suggested meekly that he "bring the strike to New York and *show* it to workers." As her plan unfolded, it involved the dramatic reenactment of the actual strike to be held in Madison Square Garden. Instantaneously reporter John Reed volunteered: "We'll make a Pageant of the Strike! The first in the World!"<sup>40</sup> When Haywood conveyed the proposal

35. Golin 48–49, 51.

36. Golin 46–47.

37. Foner 362.

38. Hutchins Hapgood, "Free Speech in Peril, They Say," [New York *Evening Globe*]. Hutchins Hapgood Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Hereafter referred to as Beinecke.

39. Scott 854; "The Conviction of Alexander Scott," *The International Socialist Review* 14 (July 1913): 10.

40. Carlson 211, 217–218; Mabel Dodge Luhan, *Movers and Shakers*, Volume III of Mabel

to the strikers, they approved it. To Haywood the Pageant represented an opportunity to blend art and politics, to harness culture for the purposes of the working class: "The strikers of Paterson felt that 'life without labor is robbery, labor without art is barbarity.' They proceeded to produce the greatest labor pageant ever held in America."<sup>41</sup>

While Mabel Dodge's memoirs make it appear that she inspired Reed to go to Paterson to gather material for a labor pageant, there is no definitive evidence of such motivation on his part.<sup>42</sup> No matter how problematic the origins of the Pageant, it represented a revolution in dramatic form and was the product of a unique collaboration between rebel New York intellectuals and striking silk workers. John Reed organized the radicals on the Pageant Committee: Big Bill Haywood; F. Sumner Boyd, a Socialist imprisoned in Paterson for reading the free-speech provision of the New Jersey state constitution; Alexander Berkman, the anarchist who had been jailed fourteen years for the attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick during the 1892 Homestead Strike; Italian poet Arturo Giovannitti; elderly activist Jessie Ashley; patroness Mabel Dodge; novelist and settlement house worker Ernest Poole; hobo-poet Harry Kemp; Socialist Margaret Sanger; and author Hutchins Hapgood. In the two weeks of preparation Reed made frequent trips to Paterson to gather material for the Pageant and to rehearse the workers. Then he would return exhausted to New York City to inspire the bickering Pageant committee to work together despite their political and artistic differences.<sup>43</sup>

The Pageant evolved from a modest affair into a grandiose one, as the original cast swelled from two hundred strikers selected to march the twenty-three miles from Paterson to Madison Square Garden to recreate the strike to an actual cast of 1,029 striking Pater-

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Dodge Luhan, *Intimate Memories* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936) 186–189.

41. William D. Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book: The Autobiography of William D. Haywood* (New York: International Publishers, 1929) 262.

42. Luhan 188–189; Rosenstone footnote 126–127.

43. Rosenstone 127; [Edward Eyre Hunt?], "I want to try to tell you a bit about our Pageant," unsigned letter of 9 June 1913 and "I want to try to tell you about our Pageant," unsigned letter of 12 June 1913 in John Reed Manuscripts, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Hereafter referred to as Houghton.

son workers.<sup>44</sup> It was the largest cast ever assembled in a New York production, and it made the Pageant an impressive spectacle as it welded together so many actors of different nationalities and languages.<sup>45</sup> Reed had been jailed in Paterson for four days for observing the strike and upon his release had resigned from the staff of the *American Magazine* to work with the strikers in creating the Pageant.<sup>46</sup> Reed had been inspired by Mabel Dodge's suggestion to "write a great labor drama in which the mass strike would play a prominent part," and his subsequent arrest and incarceration in Paterson served merely to spur his dramatic efforts.<sup>47</sup>

It is significant that those dramatic efforts involved a unique form of collaboration between Reed and the striker actors. At the rehearsals Reed engaged the workers in a form of method acting as he outlined the plot and asked the strikers to improvise lines of dialogue and bits of acting business. They responded by criticizing the accuracy of their own improvisations: "The strikers were actors, managers, critics, and public thrown into one."<sup>48</sup> The rehearsals emphasized the need to present an authentic reproduction of the actual scenes and atmosphere of Paterson and to convey the emotional significance of the strike. Reed and Dodge stage managed the production and coached the actors to relive the strike emotionally: "Forget the audience, remember that you are only striking and try to feel and act just as you do in Paterson."<sup>49</sup> What served as an inspiration to New York intellectuals suffering from their own inability to reconcile art, politics, and personal life was the fact that the strikers had created a dramatic form that ideally allowed them the possibility of such reconciliation:

This pageant could not have been successfully given in two weeks time unless there had been much preliminary training. This preliminary train-

44. Foner 365–366.

45. Luhan 207.

46. Foner 365.

47. Hutchins Hapgood, "The Poet's Arrest," [New York *Evening Globe*], Hutchins Hapgood Papers, Beinecke.

48. [Hunt?], "I want to tell you about our Pageant," unsigned letter of 12 June 1913, 2–3. Quotation appears on p. 3.

49. Hutchins Hapgood, "No Mere Mimic Fervor, That of Striker-Actors," [New York *Evening Globe*], Hutchins Hapgood Papers, Beinecke.



ing came from their long strike itself—the meetings of the strikers, their growing understanding of themselves and their cause and their situation. They were unconsciously rehearsing all through this strike of three months and a half. Life passed over insensibly into a certain, simple form of art.<sup>50</sup>

Music was crucial to the Pageant rehearsals and played a vital role in the actual performance. The workers were eager to express themselves in song and unselfconscious about their musical efforts: “The proletariat seems to have its own music at last.” The I.W.W. already had published its famous songbook and had a reputation for the use of song as a weapon in the class struggle. And at Paterson the Italian and German choral societies, a composer of revolutionary songs expressly written for the Paterson conflict, and the ensemble of Italians, Poles, Germans, and Jews were eager to make a musical contribution to the final pageant.<sup>51</sup> And, in fact, the fourth episode of the actual Pageant featured songs in German, Italian, and English that had been born out of the struggle as well as the singing of the traditional labor anthems “The Marseillaise” and “The Internationale.”<sup>52</sup> Reed contributed a note of Ivy League mockery to these musical endeavors. As Mabel Dodge noted of Reed’s rehearsal of the strikers: “One of the gayest touches, I think, was teaching them to sing one of their lawless songs to the tune of ‘Harvard, old Harvard!’ ”<sup>53</sup>

The strike itself was an inspiration to New York rebel intellectuals because of its inherent dramatic interest; it provided literary material for aspiring novelists like Leroy Scott and Ernest Poole, dramatist Thompson Buchanan, and journalist John Reed.<sup>54</sup> Hence it is not surprising that the Pageant that was born out of the strike galvanized these Village rebels into an outpouring of their talents. The Pageant enabled them to demonstrate their commitment to the class struggle, to forge an alliance between artists and striking

50. Hutchins Hapgood, “The Strikers’ Pageant,” [New York *Evening Globe*], Hutchins Hapgood Papers, Beinecke. Cf. Leslie Fishbein, *Rebels in Bohemia: The Radicals of The Masses, 1911–1917* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982) passim for a discussion of the conflicts experienced by the Village rebels.

51. [Hunt?], “I want to try to tell you about our Pageant,” unsigned letter of 12 June 1913, 3.

52. “The Paterson Strike Pageant” 1407.

53. Luhan 204.

54. Upton Sinclair, *American Outpost: A Book of Reminiscences* (Pasadena, California: Published by the Author, 1932) 261–262.

workers that would enable art to play a revolutionary role in class conflict:

Journalists like Hapgood and Steffens, writers like Upton Sinclair, Inez Haynes Gilmore, the socialist theorist William English Walling, and the ex-working girl Rose Pastor Stokes publicized the Pageant. People with theatrical experience like Ernest Poole, Thompson Buchanan, Edward Hunt, and the young stage designer Robert Edmond Jones planned the logistics of production. John Sloan painted the imposing two-hundred-foot backdrop of a great silk mill, flanked by a number of smaller mills.<sup>55</sup>

It was Reed who persuaded the normally apolitical Bobby Jones, a man whose only interest lay in the theatre, to design the stage setting, and Jones proved enormously creative despite his scant resources. As a backdrop Jones created a life-sized mill flanked by smaller mills as a suitable setting for the workers massed on stage. Jones helped efface the distinction between actors and audience by employing the central aisle of Madison Square Garden as a street in Paterson that would be used for the actors' entrance and for the funeral procession for Valentino Modestino.<sup>56</sup> While such a device did have theatrical antecedents, it never had been used so effectively in the interests of the class struggle. The actual Pageant marked the onset of the strike with an outpouring of workers from the struck mills down from the stage, marching the entire length of the central aisle of the Garden to the cheers of a sympathetic proletarian audience of fifteen thousand. In the second episode the police brutally clubbed and arrested the strikers and marched their prisoners back down the central aisle to the boos and hisses of the audience. Such staging deeply stirred the feelings of the working-class spectators whose sympathies already lay with the members of their class on stage: "It is an unequaled device for clutching the emotion of the audience—this parade of the actors thru the center of the crowd."<sup>57</sup>

While New York radical intellectuals were responsible for the scenery, staging, publicity, fundraising, and production logistics

55. Golin 53–54.

56. Rosenstone 127; Luhan 204; Mabel Dodge, Finney Farm, Croton-on-Hudson, New York, *Robert Edmond Jones*, 9 pp., Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke.

57. "The Paterson Strike Pageant" 1406–1407. Quotation appears on p. 1406.

for the Pageant, it was the workers themselves who were responsible for the ultimate decision to stage the pageant.<sup>58</sup> Rapidly mounting costs and the press censorship of all news about the performance led the Executive Committee to vote unanimously to abandon the project. Despite the bankruptcy of their own relief fund and the problematic nature of their own strike efforts, New York silk strikers pledged to raise five thousand dollars and to mount the Pageant themselves if the New York intellectuals were to desert the project. And they, in fact, collected the funds necessary to sustain the Pageant and insure its performance.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the collaboration between rebel artists and workers was no matter of noblesse oblige, of cultural diffusion from elite to the mass. Instead it honed the consciousness and commitment to the class struggle of workers and artists alike.

The final performance was a media event as well over a thousand strikers took a special train to New York City and marched to Madison Square Garden for lunch and a final rehearsal.<sup>60</sup> The organizers also flaunted the authorities by secretly placing the letters I.W.W. ten feet high on each side of the Madison Square Tower, then turning on the electricity so that the bright red electric lights proclaimed their seditious message too late for the municipal bureaucracy to quench them by censorship.<sup>61</sup> The Pageant left a lasting mark on Wobbly iconography because its program cover, with a worker lunging forward against a backdrop of silk mills, came to symbolize I.W.W. militancy.<sup>62</sup> (See p. 227, below.)

The program itself marked a radical departure from traditional pageant form since the Paterson Pageant was set contemporaneously in 1913, involved current events rather than history, used actual strike participants rather than actors, and, rather than hallow the status quo, sought to alter it fundamentally. The program explicitly adopted a syndicalist view of history: "The Pageant represents a battle between the working class and the capitalist class conducted by the

58. Luhan 204–205.

59. [Hunt?], "I want to try to tell you about our Pageant," unsigned letter of 12 June 1913, 1.

60. [Hunt?], "I want to try to tell you about our Pageant," unsigned letter of 12 June 1913, 3–4; Golin 52.

61. Luhan 203.

62. Renshaw 115.

Industrialist Workers of the World (I.W.W.), making use of the General Strike as the chief weapon.”<sup>63</sup> And the actual performance, given its intention to document reality via dramatic reenactment, marked the birth of docudrama as a weapon in the class struggle.

The Pageant opened with *The Mills Alive—The Workers Dead* at dawn one February morning as the mill windows were aglow, and workers braved the bitter cold to come to work. As the strike began, the striking workers sang “The Marseillaise,” and the entire audience was invited to join in this revolutionary song. In *Episode Two: The Mills Dead—The Workers Alive* mass picketing resulted in police brutality and pitched battles between police and strikers. In this episode an innocent bystander, Valentino Modestino, was killed by stray bullets fired by company detectives as he stood on his porch with his child in his arms. The third episode reenacted Modestino’s funeral as the strikers each dropped red carnations and ribbons upon the coffin, crimson symbols of the workers’ blood. Jones again exploited the dramatic potential of the Garden by staging the funeral procession through the central aisle, thereby including the audience in this solemn ritual. The fourth episode was a mass meeting at Haledon with speeches by I.W.W. organizers and the singing of strike songs, with the audience invited to join in the singing of “The Internationale,” “The Marseillaise,” and “The Red Flag.” The fifth episode consisted of two parts: a May Day Parade of the workers and their families and the dispersal of the children of strikers to foster parents in other cities, as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Big Bill Haywood addressed the strikers and their children. Hutchins Hapgood found this involuntary separation of strike families faced with starvation to be the most poignant moment of the Pageant. The Pageant ended with a strike meeting in Turn Hall, proof of the viability of industrial democracy as the workers enacted the eight-hour day law and heard speeches by Flynn, Haywood, and Carlo Tresca.<sup>64</sup>

The consensus with respect to the Pageant was that it was an artistic success and a political and financial failure. Initially the

63. “Program of the Paterson Strike Pageant” in *Pageant of the Paterson Strike*, 16 ALHUA.

64. “Program of the Paterson Strike Pageant” 16–17; Luhan 204; Hutchins Hapgood: “The Children of the Strikers,” [New York *Evening Globe*], Hutchins Hapgood Papers, Beinecke.

Pageant seemed to fulfill the hopes cherished by its sponsors as fifteen thousand spectators crowded into Madison Square Garden, with many strike sympathizers excluded by the police. However, only about twelve thousand paid admission, and the rest were silk strikers admitted free, upon presenting their I.W.W. membership cards, including eight hundred who had made the twenty-three mile trek from Paterson to the Garden and even more who journeyed from Hudson County, New Jersey. The Pageant Executive Committee was forced to announce that, despite a capacity crowd, the Pageant had yielded a deficit of nearly two thousand dollars as a result of the plethora of free admissions and the fact that the floor seats, advertised at \$1.50, had to be sold at the last moment for whatever they might yield in order to prevent a "floor frost" since all other seats in the Garden were occupied.<sup>65</sup>

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was most instrumental in spreading this negative view of the Pageant. In her autobiography she noted that while in New York the Pageant was acclaimed a new form of art, in Paterson its effects were divisive as over a thousand of the best strikers neglected picket duty to devote themselves to the project. Because of the substantial expenses for a single performance, the financial returns were meager, and the Paterson press accused the strike leaders and the New York Pageant Committee of diverting the funds collected to their personal use. The Pageant preparation, Flynn argued, diverted attention from picket activity and strike meetings and promoted jealousies among the strikers regarding those privileged to be selected to perform in New York.<sup>66</sup> Flynn claimed that the first scabs entered the Paterson mills while the most militant workers were engaged in pageant preparation rather than picket duty. And the Pageant's failure to raise support funds led to dissatisfaction among the workers and suspicions regarding their intellectual allies. For Flynn, the Pageant inadvertently betrayed the very strike it was intended to serve: "Bread was the need of the hour, and bread was not forthcoming even from the most beautiful and realistic example of art that has been put on the stage in the last half century."<sup>67</sup>

65. Golin 57; Luhan 210-212.

66. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl* 169-170.

67. Flynn, "The Truth About the Paterson Strike" 221-222. Quotation appears on p. 222.

However, there is substantial evidence indicating the need to revise Flynn's analysis. Certainly the Pageant was enormously successful not only at undermining the press blackout of news about the strike but at inspiring an outpouring of glowingly enthusiastic reviews by drama critics.<sup>68</sup> In fact, Bill Haywood claimed that after a period of neglecting the strike prior to the Pageant, subsequent to it the press devoted far more attention to events in Paterson.<sup>69</sup> However, the initially favorable reviews by drama critics were followed by a series of press innuendos that the Executive Committee had stolen the money of the strikers.<sup>70</sup> The press exploited the fact that New Yorkers ran the committee to create a suspicion and distrust among the strikers, thereby undermining worker solidarity during the final days of a waning strike. Flynn and other organizers who remained in Paterson as the strike ended in August had little enthusiasm left for the Pageant as the once militant workers were forced to accept disappointing shop-by-shop settlements. Since Haywood subsequently was stricken by ulcers, lost over eight pounds, and was taken to Europe by a friend while John Reed took on journalistic assignments in Mexico and then went to Europe on an extended cruise, the workers had independent confirmation of the suspicions planted by the press.<sup>71</sup>

However, it was impossible to obtain a substantial profit from a single performance of such an elaborate and expensive production, especially given the necessity of selling floor seats at a fraction of the regular price and the substantial number of free admissions granted to striking silk workers. In fact, the New York intellectuals had worked gratis to make the Pageant a success: "Everybody connected with the pageant gave their services voluntarily, no one receiving remuneration in any form, and most of them paying their own expenses as well as lending money to make the thing a success."<sup>72</sup> And the financial failure of the Pageant was offset by its dramatic success in publicizing the strike and in radicalizing its participants.<sup>73</sup> In short, the Pageant succeeded as

68. Luhan 205–210; Golin 63–64.

69. Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book* 268.

70. Sinclair 263.

71. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl* 169–170.

72. Luhan 210–212.

73. Cf. Golin 44–78 *passim*.

docudrama and hence served both as a media event and as a means of raising consciousness for participants and spectators alike.

Despite the financial failure, the Executive Committee was convinced that it had mounted a performance that was unique in the annals of labor history: "Certainly no such spectacle, presenting in dramatic form the class war raging in society, has ever been staged in America, and in scope and the number of its actors and spectators, it is like most other American achievements—without parallel in the world."<sup>74</sup> Even Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, who was hostile to the Pageant on political grounds, proclaimed it to be a singular artistic contribution to the class struggle: "It was a unique form of proletarian art. Nothing like it had happened before in the American labor movement. Nor has it happened since, to my knowledge, until the recent moving-picture production, *Salt of the Earth*, in which Mexican-American mine workers and their families graphically portrayed what actually happened in their strike."<sup>75</sup> Clearly this pageant differed from all its forebears; neither bucolic nor quaint, its concerns were neither historic nor antiquarian. Instead the Paterson Pageant sought to dramatize the lives of its own participants. As a critic in *The Independent* noted: "It was not a pageant of the past; but of the present—a new thing in our drama."<sup>76</sup> While there had been some precedents for the class-conscious use of drama and pageantry—the pageant celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Rand School had been the first labor pageant given in the United States—that pageant and others like it had emphasized history; the Paterson Pageant sought to make history instead.<sup>77</sup>

While by 1913 pageantry had only recently gained vogue in America as a means of popular entertainment and instruction, it retained its antiquarian bias even when concerned with celebrating the American past. According to Willard Orr, Deputy Commissioner of Education of Massachusetts, in Esther Willard Bates' *Pageants and Pageantry* (1912): "The factors essential to true pageantry are the use of the costumes and practices of older days and the representation of important events in history as the expres-

74. Paterson Pageant Financial Statement in Luhan 211.

75. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl* 168.

76. "The Paterson Strike Pageant" 1407.

77. Labor Pageant, 28, 29, 30 April and 1 May, John Reed Manuscripts, Houghton.



sion of the manifold activities and aspirations of the human soul.” Orr suggested that while American history might yield the most essential lessons in patriotism, a setting in pageantry would “impart something of the glamour and romance that attached to the events of Old World history, and thereby increase the interest, primarily of youth, in the records of this land.”<sup>78</sup> Thus, pageantry evolved as a highly conservative form, celebrating the past for its glamor and remoteness, teaching patriotism and reverence for prevailing institutions.

Pageantry, as it evolved in the American context, was democratic largely in the sense that it involved masses of people from a given community and scorned professional actors for amateurs. Americans in the early twentieth century tended to emphasize the didactic purposes of pageantry and were generally unconcerned with its financial profitability. While the United States imitated the English craze for pageantry and historical pageants proliferated as an expression of civic pride, critics warned that it was impossible to borrow traditions that were not indigenous, that it was particularly absurd to appropriate festivals which the original European users already had “discarded as incompatible with the complex emotions of modern life.”<sup>79</sup> While the leading textbooks on pageantry celebrated its nostalgic and historical aspects, the Paterson Pageant discarded such reverence for the past in order to present a pageant that was truly modern in setting and subject matter. Nor was profit expected to be a motive for mounting a pageant since the elaborate nature of such productions almost always precluded financial success.<sup>80</sup> In contrast, as we have seen, the Paterson Pageant was explicitly intended for fundraising purposes as a means of strike support. Since pageantry had evolved out of the mystery play of the later Middle Ages, it tended to emphasize the divine element in the historical events it chose to dramatize.<sup>81</sup> The Paterson Pageant instead celebrated the power of worker initiative to shape the future,

78. William Orr, “Introduction,” in Esther Willard Bates, *Pageants and Pageantry* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1912) 3, 8, 26. Quotations appear on pp. 8 and 26.

79. [“Modern Pageants Not Spontaneous”], *The Nation* 95 (12 September 1912): 245–246. Quotation appears on p. 246.

80. Linwood Taft, *The Technique of Pageantry* (1921; reprinted New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1925) 4.

81. Taft 5–6.

the value of human mastery rather than religious mystery.

The revolutionary nature of the Paterson Pageant can be seen even more clearly when it is contrasted with the proposals made on behalf of a civic theatre by Socialist poet Percy MacKaye. Haywood had been introduced to MacKaye during one of Haywood's visits to New York City to obtain capital for the strike, and MacKaye already had written widely on pageantry for an elite audience by the time that the Paterson Pageant was mounted.<sup>82</sup> MacKaye hoped to provide an alternative to the traditional drama in the civic theatre, whereby the people would control their own leisure, creating a theatre that would involve popular participation rather than mere spectatorship, leadership by a permanent staff of artists, "elimination of private profit by endowment and public support, dedication in service to the whole community."<sup>83</sup> However, MacKaye differed substantially from the creators of the Paterson Pageant because he accepted alienation as an inevitable result of advanced capitalism and strove solely to alleviate rather than eliminate it:

. . . in the vocations of modern industry the divorce between joy and labor has become too absolute to reconcile. Therefore increasing cry and protest arise for shorter hours of industrial labor: But to what end? The answer of the foresighted is: Art—the recreative labor of leisure. For by Art, freed from industrialism, labor is again reconciled with joy.<sup>84</sup>

In contrast, Haywood sought to integrate industrial labor and art as he defined the industrial conditions of the ideal society to the Paterson strikers:

It will be utopian. There will be a wonderful dining room where you will enjoy the best food that can be purchased; your digestion will be aided by sweet music which will be wafted to your ears by an unexcelled orchestra. There will be a gymnasium and a great marble swimming pool and private bathrooms of marble. One floor of this plant will be devoted to masterpieces of art and you will have a collection even superior to that displayed in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. A first-class library

82. Carlson 210; Percy MacKaye, *The Civic Theatre in Relation to the Redemption of Leisure: A Book of Suggestions* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912) 11–13.

83. MacKaye 15.

84. MacKaye 18–19.

will occupy another floor. . . the workrooms will be superior to any ever conceived. Your work chairs will be morris chairs, so that when you become fatigued you may relax in comfort.<sup>85</sup>

Haywood and the organizers of the Paterson Pageanty firmly believed in the possibility of integrating art and life; they held that worker control could eliminate alienated labor. In fact, journalist Hutchins Hapgood noted a profound similarity between Big Bill Hapwood and the painter Robert Henri, leader of The Eight: "Henri wants to stretch art conventions and limitations until they include more life, just as Haywood wants to stretch industrial forms until they include more life for more people."<sup>86</sup> While MacKaye despaired of industrialism and sought an alternative to it in the civic theatre, Haywood and the organizers of the Paterson Pageant sought to redeem industrial life by integrating it with art and culture.

MacKaye viewed pageantry as "poetry for the masses" and hoped that pageants would be mounted by civic theatres "owned by the people and conducted by artists, in every city of the nation." MacKaye differed from traditional proponents of pageantry in his willingness to have pageants treat modern themes rather than purely historic ones:

All vital modern forces and institutions of our nation—the press, the law, the railroads, the public-school system, athletics, the universities, the trade unions in all their variety, the vast industries of steel and copper and wheat and fisheries and agriculture, and hundreds more—might appropriately find symbolic expression in majestic masques, educative and entertaining to all the people.<sup>87</sup>

However, despite his socialism, MacKaye's approach was more a product of traditional patriotism and civic boosterism than of class consciousness. He emphasized the didactic and patriotic elements of pageantry as civic education. And there were sharp limitations on his commitment to democracy since he believed that only efficient artists could organize effective pageants,<sup>88</sup> a clear contrast

85. "Haywood's Battle in Paterson," *Literary Digest* 46 (10 May 1913): 1043–1044, cited in Kornbluh 197.

86. Hutchins Hapgood, "Haywood at Henri's," [New York *Evening Globe*], Hutchins Hapgood Papers, Beinecke.

87. MacKaye 174–177. Quotations appear on pp. 174, 176, 177.

88. MacKaye 175–176.

to Reed's intimate collaboration with the workers on the Pageant script. Furthermore, while MacKaye's civic theatre in effect asked workers to reconcile themselves to the industrial order by finding satisfaction in leisure, the Paterson Pageant included its audience in the battle to renovate industrial life. There was no curtain, so the audience was included in the action as the setting shifted from the street outside the mills, to Haledon, and then to Turn Hall in Paterson for the final strike meeting.<sup>89</sup> And that final scene was rendered even more dramatic by the fact that in it the strikers stood facing Haywood as he addressed them, their backs to the audience, who via this dramatic device were included as participants in the strike meeting. Haywood then asked "the entire audience to stand as protest against the action of the Paterson courts in Quinlan's case," thereby enlisting the viewers in an ongoing free speech flight to win the release of I.W.W. organizer Patrick Quinlan, arrested for "unlawful assemblage" and "inciting to riot" on the first day of the strike and ultimately sentenced to from two to seven years at hard labor at the Trenton state prison.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the Paterson Pageant transformed its audience from passive spectators into active participants in the class struggle.

Certainly the Paterson Pageant was the product of new vigor in the arts in the pre-World War I period accompanied by a widespread belief in the possibility of an artistic renaissance. As Reed's biographer Communist literary critic Granville Hicks noted: "The upsurge in the arts was linked with a growing sense of the need for social change. The mingling of authors and labor leaders at Mabel Dodge's salon was not merely the result of the hostess's cleverness; literature and labor were feeling their way toward each other."<sup>91</sup> The product of a unique collaboration between New York radical intellectuals and militant New Jersey labor, the Pageant marked a new moment in the arts: the birth of docudrama as a weapon in the class struggle.

While Elizabeth Gurley Flynn may well have been correct in

89. "The Paterson Strike Pageant" 1407.

90. Haywood, *Bill Haywood's Book* 264; Pageant, typescript, 2, John Reed Manuscripts, Houghton; quotation appears on p. 2; Foner 361.

91. Granville Hicks, "The Legend of John Reed," *The New Masses*, 19 October 1937, reprinted in Jack Alan Robbins, ed., *Granville Hicks in The New Masses* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1976) 346.

arguing that the Pageant was without precedent, by mentioning only the film *Salt of the Earth* as possible heir, she neglected the fact that the Pageant represented a new epoch in labor theatre. A dramatic event that stirred the thousands who viewed it, the Pageant appears to have had little direct or lasting influence, but after its performance workers' theatre and film were able to explore hitherto nonexistent possibilities. It is impossible to provide a complete survey of the transformation that the Pageant marked, but key elements of the Pageant reappeared in subsequent proletarian drama and film.

In the theatre the work of the students at the Brookwood Labor College at Katonah, New York bore the most striking affinity with the revolutionary transformation of labor drama wrought by the Pageant. The Brookwood actors were not professionals but workers themselves reliving their own experiences for proletarian audiences. The works they produced were collaborative efforts with workers in labor chautauquas responsible for writing, staging, costuming, and production. The Brookwood actors used dramatic reenactment not so much for its value as artistic innovation as for its ability to arouse sympathy and support from fellow workers: "Eager to learn all they can about workers and to arouse them to action, they practice art, not for art's sake, but for action's sake." And to insure audience involvement, the Brookwood chautauquas included mass recitations and audience participation in the singing of labor songs, hoping thereby to reach the workers emotionally as well as intellectually. Often the performances were sponsored by trade unions and labor organizations, who might underwrite the expenses in order to allow their members to attend free.<sup>92</sup>

In particular, the productions of the Brookwood Players were noteworthy for their use of dramatic reenactment. While all the plays they produced were intended as weapons in the class struggle, some of them reenacted contemporary events and were intended to arouse audience action in response to an immediate crisis while others were reenactments of past strikes dramatized in hopes of

92. Labor Chautauquas, Plays, Mass Recitations, Songs, By and for Workers, Brookwood Labor College Players, Katonah, New York, The Brookwood Labor College Players, Katonah, New York, The Brookwood Labor Players Clipping File, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts, The New York Public Library. Hereafter referred to as Lincoln Center. "The Brookwood Players Complete Long Tour," *New York Post*, 8 July 1936, The Brookwood Labor Players Clipping File, Lincoln Center.

stimulating class consciousness. An example of the former was *Shades of Passaic: A Dramatic Study in Expressionism* (1926), a dramatization of a Communist-led textile strike in Passaic, New Jersey. Like the Pageant, *Shades of Passaic* chose for its hero the masses and chronicled their arousal from despair and their ultimate triumph. And the 1926 drama also alluded to contemporary events regarding the suppression of free speech in New Jersey and made use of "The Internationale" to rouse audience emotion. However, with one scene actually set in Purgatory, *Shades of Passaic* was expressionistic in form, far more symbolic and metaphorical than the Pageant had been.<sup>93</sup> In 1932 Brookwood's *Mill Shadows* dramatized the 1929 textile strike in Marion, North Carolina. Tom Tippet, its author, had been a direct participant in the organizing campaign and strike and sought to provide an almost literal account of the events he had witnessed. The actors were largely workers themselves, if not necessarily actual strike participants, and the performance was intended as a fundraiser to aid starving miners.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the Brookwood Players also made use of the principles of docudrama, attempting the dramatic reenactment of actual events in labor history to promote worker participation in the class struggle.

In radical film the analogies to the Paterson Pageant are even more striking. There is virtually no evidence of direct influence, but leftwing cinema explored the possibilities of docudrama as early as the Twenties and elaborated it in far more sophisticated form in films such as the documentary *Native Land* (1942) and the docudrama *Salt of the Earth* (1954). Many of the leading radical filmmakers active in the documentary movement of the Thirties and Forties denied any explicit influence of the Pageant. Whether they worked independently like Joris Ivens or Willard Van Dyke or as members of the Workers Film and Photo League, Nykino, and Frontier Films like Leo Hurwitz, Leo Seltzer, or Ben Maddow, they knew little or nothing about the Pageant. Ivens, a Dutch filmmaker

93. Bonichi Friedman and Stanley Frances Guest, *Shades of Passaic: A Dramatic Study in Expressionism*, Brookwood Labor College, Katonah, New York, 1926. Copyright 1926 by Brookwood, Inc., 8 pp., Brookwood Labor College Plays File, Tamiment Institute Library, New York University, New York City. Hereafter referred to as Tamiment.

94. The Brookwood Players under the Auspices of The Vassar League for Industrial Democracy Present *Mill Shadows* by Tom Tippet, Dedicated to the Textile Workers of Marion, North Carolina and to The Labor Movement The Workers Will One Day Build, program, 5 pp. Lincoln Center.

who exerted tremendous influence on American radical documentary production after his arrival in New York, claimed that “progressive film makers [*sic*] in Europe did’nt [*sic*] know much about the 1913 Paterson Silk Strike and the reenactment of John Reed held in Madison Square graden [*sic*]”; although he had read Granville Hicks’ biography of Reed, which appeared in 1936, Ivens did not “remember much about the Paterson Pageant.”<sup>95</sup> Willard Van Dyke “never heard of the Paterson Pageant” while Leo Seltzer and Leo Hurwitz noted that they had been too young to have seen it. Hurwitz claims that, while John Reed had been inspirational for the Left well before the appearance of Hicks’ biography, which Hurwitz had read, neither the Paterson Pageant nor its successors during the Thirties stirred the creative imagination of documentary filmmakers who instead were responding to the exigencies of the Great Depression just as Reed had responded to the crisis in Paterson.<sup>96</sup> Ben Maddow is even more explicit about the failure of the Pageant to inspire the use of docudrama in radical documentaries:

Although I was at high school in Passaic during the violent strikes of the 1920s, and I’m quite sure they influenced me during the writing of the film *Native Land*, which was, to date, the most elaborate American documentary reenactment of historic events, I have no recollection whatever of the Paterson Pageant. It is obvious from the dates that I was too young to have seen it, but I’ve never heard it mentioned or discussed in left film circles. In my opinion, we were all tremendously influenced by Eisenstein’s *Potemkin* and *Ten Days*, and even more so by Dovzhenko’s special mixture of rhetoric, fact, and visual poetry. We all believed these films to be a true reenactment of history; that they were not quite fact (neither was *Native Land*) never troubled me at the time.<sup>97</sup>

Yet, while it seems abundantly clear that the Pageant had no clear direct influence on radical film, the Pageant in effect created the dramatic techniques that leftwing filmmakers were to adopt in their own work and offered an unprecedented set of creative possibilities that were to be explored independently by these filmmakers. If the Pageant represented the birth of docudrama as a weapon in the class

95. Joris Ivens, letter to the author, Paris, 7 July 1983; William Alexander, *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) 113, 121–123.

96. Willard Van Dyke, letter to the author, Sante Fe, New Mexico, 1 June 1983; Leo Hurwitz, telephone conversation with the author, New York City, 26 May 1983; Leo Seltzer, telephone conversation with the author, New York City, 20 May 1983.

97. Ben Maddow, letter to the author, Los Angeles, 24 May 1983.



struggle, the works produced by radical filmmakers in the Twenties, Thirties, Forties, and Fifties represented its rebirth.

A compelling early example of the use of this new technique occurred in the documentary film *The Passaic Textile Strike* (1926) a film that began as a collaborative effort between professional filmmakers and striking textile workers but which evolved into a genuine example of proletarian art:

The workers made this film while the long strike was still in progress. They held showings around the country to raise funds for the relief of the strikers. At first they hired professional filmmakers, but found them unwilling to risk filming real events; newsreel cameramen had been beaten and their cameras smashed. The strikers dismissed the professionals and took over the making of the film themselves.<sup>98</sup>

Like the Paterson Pageant, *The Passaic Textile Strike* was intended as a fundraiser to alleviate the plight of 16,000 textile strikers and their families victimized by the protracted nature of their struggle. With hundreds jailed and awaiting trial and thousands facing destitution, the strike needed some dramatic means of publicity and fundraising. In fact, the film received nationwide distribution, appearing at strike benefit performances in cities such as New York, Cleveland, Buffalo, Chicago, Milwaukee, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Denver, and Boston. The film was a tremendous success in labor circles and had many repeat performances by popular demand; by 1927 it had become "the principal source of relief funds for the Passaic workers."<sup>99</sup>

98. *Thomas Brandon 1908-1982*, brochure, The Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatre, 18 West 54 Street, New York, Tuesday, 22 February 1983, 6:00 p.m., The Thomas Brandon Collection, The Museum of Modern Art Film Study Center, New York City. Hereafter referred to as MOMAFSC.

99. Cyril V. Briggs, "Passaic Strike Film is Graphic Struggle Picture," *Daily Worker* 23 September 1926, 2; "New Labor Motion Picture Now Ready for Showing: 'The Passaic Textile Strike,'" *Daily Worker* 24 September 1926, 2; "Benefit Here Will Portray Passaic Millworkers Struggles," *Daily Worker* 5 October 1926, 5; "Benefit Here Will Portray Passaic Millworkers Struggles," *Daily Worker* 11 October 1926, 5; Robert Wolf, "Now Showing—All-Star Cast," *Daily Worker* 18 October 1926, 6; "Ticket Sale for Passaic Picture Here Going Big," *Daily Worker* 12 October 1926 p. ?; "Cleveland to See Big Labor Movie of Famed Passaic Mill Strike," *Daily Worker* 21 October 1926, 5; "Chicago Federation Radio Station Will Broadcast Passaic," *Daily Worker* 22 October, 1926, 2; "Cleveland Will See Passaic Strike Film, Friday, October 22," *Daily Worker* 22 October 1926, 2; "Milwaukee Workers Urged to Witness 'The Passaic Strike,'" *Daily Worker* 23 October 1926, 4; "Boston Labor Enthuses Over Passaic Picture," *Daily Worker* 23 October 1926, 4; "The Passaic Strike," in "A Peek Each Week at Motion Pictures," *Daily Worker* 23 October 1926, Supplement, 2; "See 'The Passaic Textile Strike,'" *Daily Worker* 26 October 1926, 4; "Huge Crowd to See Passaic Strike Movie," *Daily Worker* 26 October 1926, 4; "20 Cities to See Passaic Strike Movie," *Daily Worker* 26 October 1926, 4; "Passaic Strike Movie Gets Fine

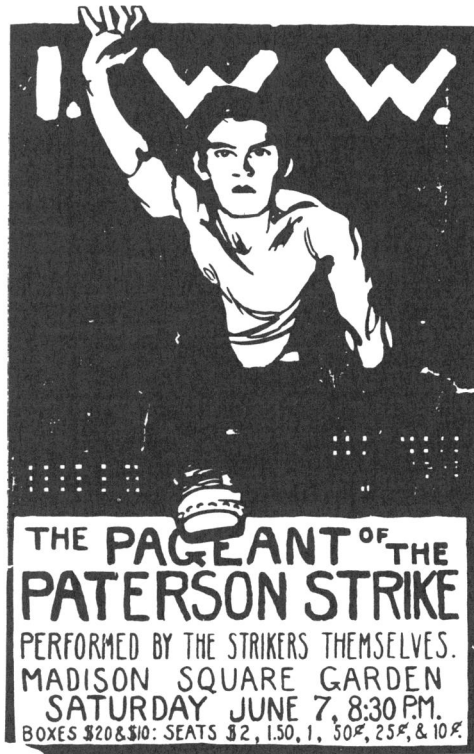
While the bulk of the film consisted of actuality footage, the film opened with “a prologue acted by some of the strikers themselves, showing the home life of a typical mill family as it carries on the struggle for a precarious existence on starvation wages, with the mother and children forced to work in the mills to make even that existence possible.”<sup>100</sup> While the film was less coherent artistically than the Pageant because of its inability to create a synthesis of documentary and drama, it did share with the Pageant a desire to use drama to stir workers emotionally in a way that documentary alone could not. *The Passaic Textile Strike* was clearly polemical in intent. Its opening credits ran: “Begun: January 25, 1926. To End: When Victory is Won.”—and the film dedicated itself to building the American labor movement via unionization. The Prologue is the story of the Breznac family, symbolic of any family of textile workers, who migrate to America, believing it to be the “Land of Promise,” only to find their dreams betrayed by industrial oppression and poverty: “The players lay no claim to Art, except as Art is compounded of simple truth. The incidents are just the common facts of the textile workers’ lives, empty perhaps of those flaming passions seen so often on the screen, but full of the actual tragedy of deadening labor and despairing struggle.”

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Support in Boston and Vicinity,” *Daily Worker* 26 October 1926, 4; “Radio Broadcasting of Passaic Strike Is Here Tuesday Night,” *Daily Worker* 26 October 1926, 4; “Two Showings of Passaic Strike Picture Tonight,” *Daily Worker* 29 October 1926, 2; “Tonight—See—In Chicago” *Daily Worker* 29 October 1926, 2; “Haverhill Workers Enthused Over Film of Passaic Strike,” *Daily Worker* 5 November 1926, 4; “Passaic Strike Film Shows Again in Ohio,” *Daily Worker* 5 November 1926, 4; “Denver Assembly to Sponsor Showing of ‘The Passaic Strike,’” *Daily Worker* 7 November 1926, 5; “Buffalo Sees Picture on Passaic, Nov. 29–30,” *Daily Worker* 10 November 1926, 5; “Passaic Film Returns,” *Daily Worker* 11 November 1926, 2; “‘The Passaic Strike’ To Be Shown in N.Y. At New Casino Friday,” *Daily Worker* 11 November 1926, 2; “Show Passaic Strike Picture in Newark This Friday Night,” *Daily Worker* 26 November 1926, 2; “‘The Passaic Strike’ on Broadway!,” *Daily Worker* 27 November 1926, 2; “Passaic Movie for Children’s Aid,” *Daily Worker* 29 November (?) n.p.; “Erie, Pa. Chamber of Commerce Blocks Showing of Passaic Strike Picture,” *Daily Worker*, National Edition, 7 January 1927, 2; “A Peek Each Week at Motion Pictures,” *Daily Worker* 9 January 1927, Supplement, 2; “Pittsburgh Will See Passaic Strike Film,” *Daily Worker* 10 (?) January 1927, 4; “Sell 4,000 Tickets in Fifth Cleveland Passaic Film Showing,” *Daily Worker* 2 February 1927, 2; “Passaic Textile Strike Film Will Be Shown in New York, at Waldorf Theatre, Sunday,” *Daily Worker* 3 March 1927, 4; “Help Passaic Organize! You Can Do This by Seeing the ‘Passaic Textile Strike’: A Motion Picture,” *Daily Worker* 4 March 1927, 5; “Passaic Strike Film is Truly Labor Product; Professional Movie People Couldn’t Do It,” *Daily Worker*, 10 May 1927, 2; quotation appears on p. 2, Thomas Brandon Collection, MOMAFSC.

100. Briggs, 2.

*The cover of the program of the Paterson Pageant. Tamiment Library, New York University.*



While both the film and the Pageant glorify the masses in the class struggle, the Pageant is a more authentic example of proletarian drama while the film borrows heavily from melodrama and focuses on a single family for its emotional appeal rather than on the events of the strike at large. In the film we see the dissolution of a traditional Polish-American family as the father faces wage cuts that force his wife and daughter into the mills, where his adolescent daughter is seduced and dismissed by the wealthy boss and her father collapses and dies of exhaustion from overwork. The Prologue ends on a note of despair as the widow is forced to become the family breadwinner and is doomed to a life of industrial slavery.

The documentary portion of the film that follows is intended to provide hope to the oppressed as it views the Passaic Strike of 1926 as part of the struggle to organize the mass of unorganized workers, to establish a “United Front of the Workers Against the United Front of the Bosses.” It documents via pay envelopes the abysmally low wages, it shows the effects of the speedup system and the irregular hours on the workers’ health, and it contrasts the poverty of the workers with the elegant life style of the owners. Since

two of the film's seven reels are missing, it is difficult to know exactly how the dramatic reenactment and documentary footage are related, but Mr. Mulius, the boss (played by a worker) and Gus Deak, the actual rank-and-file leader, appear in both sequences, and the documentary portrays Mulius' abortive attempt to bribe Deak with a promotion and the latter's loyalty to his fellow workers and their strike demands. Like the Pageant, the film included footage of police brutality and the funeral procession of Frank Dido, a martyred comrade. And just as the fifth episode of the Pageant had an episode devoted exclusively to women and children as the children were evacuated to foster homes in other cities, so did the film feature women with baby carriages leading the picket lines. While the Pageant celebrated the I.W.W. free speech fight in Paterson, the film highlighted the attempt of Sheriff George P. Nimmo of Bergen County to suppress all peaceable assemblies of workers by invoking an ancient riot act and illegally imposing martial law and the successful campaign by the American Civil Liberties Union to restore free speech. To dramatize the oppression the film reenacted the arrest of strike leader Albert Weisbord "on false charges of sedition and inciting to riot," claiming that he was "Arrested without a warrant! Kept incommunicado for two days!" while photographing him smiling and waving from his cell window, an obvious instance in which the visual utterly subverts the printed word it is intended to document.

Like the Pageant, the film ends with the oratory of strike leaders, but in the film it is not outside organizers like Weisbord, Alfred Wagenknecht, or Elizabeth Gurley Flynn who are presented but leaders who have emerged from the strikers themselves, with the final speech being that of Gustav Deak, featured in the Prologue and the documentary footage as the incorruptible rank-and-file leader.<sup>101</sup> It is ironic that, although she was an active participant in both the Pageant and the film, Flynn failed to recognize their strong affinities.<sup>102</sup> In fact, both contemporary and subsequent critics have stressed instead the strong resemblance to revolutionary Soviet films like *Potemkin* although *Potemkin* was not shown in the United States until after the debut of the strike film.<sup>103</sup> Thus,

101. *The Passaic Textile Strike*, 1926, MOMAFSC.

102. Flynn, *The Rebel Girl* 168.

103. Wolf 6; *Thomas Brandon 1908-1982*.

*The Passaic Textile Strike* remains an enigmatic anomaly, a less coherent attempt than the Pageant to document an ongoing labor struggle via the use of dramatic reenactment of actual strike events, a film that simultaneously anticipated cinematic devices that would make *Potemkin* an exciting revolutionary film.

The impulse that prompted the Passaic strikers to produce *The Passaic Textile Strike* and an ardent pamphlet, *Hell in New Jersey*, laden with documentary photographs, emerged as a full-scale filmic movement in the Thirties with the birth of the Workers Film and Photo League.<sup>104</sup> The League engaged in the production of newsreels to be used immediately after production to promote worker militancy in ongoing struggles and as fundraisers to support such battles. However, League dissidents wished to produce dramatized documentaries and broke away from the parent group to create Nykino.<sup>105</sup> Among the Nykino productions was one highly reminiscent of the Paterson Pageant, namely *Sunnyside*, the account of a mortgage interest strike in a garden community in New Jersey as its middle-class residents resisted interest increases and eviction. Like the Pageant, the script for the film was a collaborative effort involving the Sunnyside homeowners and radical filmmakers, with shooting as close to actual location as possible, with the tenants reenacting their role in the struggle. The film celebrates class action; although it features Mrs. Corinne Thal, an owner whose eviction had been threatened on December 31, 1935, it is the collective action of the protesters who rally as a community and force their way into the house, making future evictions more costly to the mortgage companies, who demonstrate that even white collar residents can exhibit class solidarity.<sup>106</sup> Thus, in its use of actual mortgage strike participants as actors, its collaborative script, its celebration of mass action rather than individual heroism, and its reenactment of recent events to spur the class struggle, *Sunnyside* resembled the Pageant in both structure and purpose.

Progressive filmmakers further explored the possibility of creat-

104. *Hell in New Jersey: Story of the Passaic Textile Strike Told in Pictures* (Passaic: General Relief Committee, Textile Strikers, 1926), 47 pp., Thomas Brandon Collection, MOMAFSC.

105. Cf. Alexander 3–144; Russell Campbell, *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States, 1930–1942* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982) 29–144.

106. Campbell 139–143; *Sunnyside*, 1936, MOMAFSC.

ing independent, realistic films of American life with the foundation of Frontier Films in 1937. Among the films produced *People of the Cumberland* (1938) and *Native Land* (1942) both employed docudrama as a cinematic technique. Like the Pageant, *People of the Cumberland* was intended to serve as a fundraising vehicle, in this case for the Highlander Folk School in Mount Eagle, Tennessee. The film represented a collaboration between screenwriter and director Elia Kazan, cameraman Ralph Steiner, and the Cumberland lime plant workers and members of the Highlander Folk School, an institution that trained labor organizers. The filming itself was an affirmation of the right of free speech because management had forbidden shooting the reenactment of a meeting with lime plant workers on company ground. The film includes several instances of dramatic reenactment, all of them crude and unsophisticated and less compelling than the documentary footage. The reenactments include a scene in which Myles Horton, the founder, with pipe in hand and seated at his ease catechizes the young students at Highlander regarding the benefits of unionization as they work in the field; in another a girl tries to milk a cow while reading a book. In order to include a scene depicting the murder of a union organizer photographer Paul Strand employed a Greenwich Village backyard and changed the event's length and pace, employing a Hollywood *mise en scène*, dialogue, and dramatic lighting that rendered the sequence far more expressionistic than the rest of the film. While *People of the Cumberland* made relatively simple use of docudrama, it is significant that, like that Pageant, the film was a collective effort between workers and rebel intellectuals, that it was intended as a fundraiser, and used the docudrama it did to allow its viewers a personal identification with the students and staff at Highlander. And, like the Pageant, *People of the Cumberland* intended not merely to persuade its audience but to spur it to action supportive of the class struggle since the film ended with a youth putting the shot at a rally, his fist breaking the frame, using this symbol of militancy much as the Pageant poster with the lunging worker did to efface the separation between audience and actor, between actuality and drama.<sup>107</sup>

107. Alexander 145–149, 172–179; *People of the Cumberland*, 1938, MOMAFSC. Cf. Leslie



The culmination of Frontier Films' decision to produce realistic labor films came with the release of *Native Land* in 1942. An anachronism at the time of its release since the film hearkened back to the Popular Front and had only minimal awareness of the exigencies of World War II, *Native Land* was the climax of years of study and experimentation by the members of Frontier Films; their longest effort and fullest production, it "introduced a new feature form weaving together enacted stories and documentary episodes."<sup>108</sup> Based on the little known reports of the La Follette Senate Civil Liberties Committee and on Leo Huberman's popularization of its activities, *The Labor Spy Racket* (1937), the film sought to dramatize the gains achieved by the militant trade union movement in the Thirties in the face of industrial espionage and violent repression.<sup>109</sup>

Leo Hurwitz, Paul Strand, and the other filmmakers who produced *Native Land* wanted their claim to documentary truth to be unassailable; hence the film is scrupulously faithful to the evidence uncovered by the La Follette Senate hearings and by American Civil Liberties Union investigations. Such factual incidents constitute the core of the screenplay: "the murder of a union farmer in Michigan in 1934, and of a labor organizer in Cleveland in 1936; the shooting down of two Arkansas sharecroppers (one black; one white) by deputies, again in 1936; the infamous Shoemaker killing of November 30, 1935, in which the Ku Klux Klan tarred and feathered progressive candidates in a local Florida election; and the Republic Steel Massacre of 1937."<sup>110</sup> Even the extended enacted segment dealing with industrial espionage simply dramatized procedures exposed in the La Follette hearings. Hurwitz hoped to use dramatic reenactment, which he considered a special facet of his

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Fishbein, "People of the Cumberland (1938): A Dialectic in Perplexity," *Labor History* 25 (Fall 1984): 565-576.

108. *Native Land*, 1942, MOMAFSC; Leo Hurwitz, "One Man's Voyage: Ideas and Films in the 1930s," *Cinema Journal* 15 (Fall 1975): 14-15 Cf. Leslie Fishbein, "Native Land: Document and Documentary," *Film & History* 14 (December 1984): 73-88.

109. Michael and Jill Klein, "Native Land: An Interview with Leo Hurwitz," *Cineaste* 6 (1974): 5; Leo Huberman, *The Labor Spy Racket* (New York: Modern Age Books, Inc., 1937); United States Congress, Senate Committee on Education and Labor, *Violations of Free Speech and Rights of Labor*, Reports 1-4, 75th Congress, 1st Session, Report No. 46, Parts I-VI.

110. Campbell 242.



“synthetic documentary form,” to revitalize the documentary by making it a more organic form, one that would create needs and anxieties in the viewer that could achieve resolution only by action.<sup>111</sup> The “first full-length feature movie made for the labor movement,” *Native Land* had a cast that could “best be described as just the people of America—workers, farmers, store keepers, children—and a few trained actors.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, *Native Land* resembled the Pageant in its use of worker actors, its experimentation with dramatic reenactment of actual events of labor history, and its commitment to engaging the audience emotionally in order to promote activism in the class struggle.

The apotheosis of the docudrama form was produced by filmmakers who openly defied the Hollywood blacklist to create a film that blurred the traditional distinction between art and life by having actual participants in a New Mexico mining strike reenact the events of the strike itself. With only a handful of professional actors, *Salt of the Earth* recounted a strike led by the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers against a zinc mining firm in Hanover, New Mexico. While Michael Wilson, a Hollywood screenwriter, was responsible for the treatment, he proceeded only with the approval of members of the mining community, who actually vetoed scenes that were objectionable because they would have portrayed the Mexican-American hero as an adulterer and a drunkard, stereotypes unacceptable to the workers. Producer Paul Jarrico estimated that by the time of production roughly four hundred people had read the screenplay in whole or in part, merely one instance of the fully collaborative nature of the film’s creation. *Salt of the Earth* sought to exploit the technical expertise of its filmmakers, skills honed to serve the Hollywood dream machine, in order to create a film that would have the credibility of documentary and the emotional impact of the feature form. Although the film suggests that the strikers’ victory may have been a fleeting one, that it is only one episode in an ongoing struggle, *Salt of the Earth* insists that collective action can save the working class and

III. Hurwitz, “One Man’s Voyage” 12–13.

112. “Building Trades Union Press,” Saturday, 9 May 1942, Vic Leavitt, “Native Land”, [sic] America’s First Labor Feature Film at World Theatre, May 9, *Native Land* Clipping File, MOMAFSC.

leave a lasting heritage for future generations of workers' children. As the community successfully resists the eviction of the Quintero family that the owners had sought to use as a means of breaking the strike, the protagonists assure each other and the audience that class solidarity will lead to triumph.

Ramon: You are right. Together we can pick everything up with us as we go.

Esperanza's voice: Then I knew that we had won something they could never take away—something I could leave to our children—and they, the salt of the earth, would inherit it.<sup>113</sup>

Like the Paterson Pageant, and unlike films like *The Passaic Textile Strike*, *Sunnyside*, *People of the Cumberland*, and *Native Land*, *Salt of the Earth* managed to fuse documentary and drama into a compelling organic form.

The problems faced by Paul Jarrico and director Herbert J. Biberman in creating *Salt of the Earth*—"How could we by-pass the pitfall of naturalism—a mere surface record of actual events—and emerge with an imaginative work of art that was still true in detail? How could we best blend the social authenticity of documentary form with the personal authenticity of dramatic form?"—were the dilemmas confronting the creators of the Paterson Pageant and its successors in radical theatre and film.<sup>114</sup> If the Paterson Pageant failed to exert much influence on the debate that followed, it nevertheless articulated for the first time the terms of that debate by offering a new concept in labor theatre, the use of docudrama as a weapon in the class struggle.

113. *Salt of the Earth*, Screenplay by Michael Wilson, Commentary by Deborah Silverton Rosenfelt (Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1978), passim. Quotation appears in Michael Wilson, Screenplay 90. *Salt of the Earth*, 1954, Alexander Library, Rutgers/The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

114. Paul Jarrico and Herbert J. Biberman, "Breaking Ground," *California Quarterly*, 2, no. 4 (Summer 1953), reprinted in Rosenfelt and Wilson 70.